



## Get the FACTS: Tick-Borne Diseases

In Montana, ticks carry two potentially serious diseases: **Rock Mountain Spotted Fever** and **Tularemia**. Although not in Montana, **Lyme Disease** is commonly carried by ticks in many other regions of the United States. Therefore, outdoor enthusiasts and travelers should take precautions while outside.

### Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever (RMSF)

RMSF is characterized by a sudden onset of moderate to high fever (which can last for two or three weeks), severe headache, fatigue, deep muscle pain, chills and rash. The rash begins on the legs or arms, may include the soles of the feet or palms of the hands and may spread rapidly to the trunk or rest of the body. Symptoms usually appear within two weeks of the bite of an infected tick.

### Tularemia

Symptoms of tularemia could include: sudden fever, chills, headaches, diarrhea, muscle aches, joint pain, dry cough and progressive weakness. People can also catch pneumonia and develop chest pain, bloody sputum and can have trouble breathing and even sometimes stop breathing. Other symptoms of tularemia depend on how a person was exposed to the tularemia bacteria. These symptoms can include ulcers on the skin or mouth, swollen and painful lymph glands, swollen and painful eyes, and a sore throat. Symptoms usually appear 3 to 5 days after exposure to the bacteria, but can take as long as 14 days.

People can get tularemia many different ways:

- being bitten by an infected tick, deerfly or other insect
- handling infected animal carcasses
- eating or drinking contaminated food or water
- breathing in the bacteria, *F. tularensis*

## Lyme Disease

Within 1 to 2 weeks of being infected, people may have a "bull's-eye" rash with fever, headache, and muscle or joint pain. Some people have Lyme disease and do not have any early symptoms. Other people have a fever and other "flu-like" symptoms without a rash.

After several days or weeks, the bacteria may spread throughout the body of an infected person. These people can get symptoms such as rashes in other parts of the body, pain that seems to move from joint to joint, and signs of inflammation of the heart or nerves. If the disease is not treated, a few patients can get additional symptoms, such as swelling and pain in major joints or mental changes, months after getting infected.

## Reducing Risk of Infection

In persons exposed to tick-infested habitats, prompt careful inspection and removal of crawling or attached ticks is an important method of preventing disease. Other prevention measures include:

- Wearing light-colored clothing -- this will allow you to see ticks that are crawling on your clothing.
- Tucking your pants legs into your socks so that ticks cannot crawl up the inside of your pants legs.
- Applying repellants to discourage tick attachment. Repellents containing permethrin can be sprayed on boots and clothing, and will last for several days. Repellents containing DEET (*n, n*-diethyl-*m*-toluamide) can be applied to the skin, but will last only a few hours before reapplication is necessary. Use DEET with caution on children because adverse reactions have been reported.
- Conducting a body check upon return from potentially tick-infested areas by searching your entire body for ticks. Use a hand-held or full-length mirror to view all parts of your body. Remove any tick you find on your body.

**For more information and resources about tick-borne diseases and other public health issues, visit us at [www.gallatin.mt.gov/health](http://www.gallatin.mt.gov/health) and click on public health information.**



*"Committed to the protection and promotion of public health."*

**Gallatin City-County Health Department**

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